

Backstory: Mayview



Located just to the west of downtown Blowing Rock is the beautiful Mayview Park. Mayview came to be what it is thanks to Charlotte native, Walter L. Alexander. Alexander settled in Blowing Rock in 1917 and would transform the town. At the time of his arrival Blowing Rock mainly consisted of two residential areas, downtown (also referred to as the “village” and Green Park. Alexander would

expand settlement in Blowing Rock westward with his creation of Mayview. Alexander published *In Cloudland: Mayview Park, Blowing Rock, North Carolina* in 1920 which would go on to captivate the hearts and minds of many and aided in Blowing Rock’s designation as a tourist destination. This travelogue featured detailed illustrations of Mayview Park with

photographs by H.W. Pelton and Earl Handy. (Above image: The Gazebo on Mayview Lake in Broyhill Park. Image via VisitNC.com. Right image:



The Mayview Manor

Clubhouse from an article circa 1920s. Image below: Guests enjoying the view at Mayview Manor circa 1930s).



Alexander began his work on Mayview Park in 1917 and would complete the first phase of this ambitious project by 1919. The original tract of land on which Mayview rests was 600 acres (400 acres were later sold to the United States Department of the Interior and became part of the National Park System). Walter Alexander personally supervised the construction of roads and footpaths, all of which were carefully graded so that they could be enjoyed by as many people as possible. Two miles of roads were made by cutting through solid rock. A multitude of cottages were constructed with Chestnut bark exteriors in Mayview Park each typically consisting of five to seven rooms with scenic views of Grandfather

Mountain and Johns River Gorge. Cottages were available to purchase or rent and lots



for cottage construction were also available for potential buyers. Those who managed to snag a cottage at Mayview had an abundance of recreational activities to take advantage of including tennis at Mayview's clay tennis courts, horseback riding, swimming, picnicking, and golf at Green Park Norwood Golf Course. The Mayview Club was a popular destination for cottagers and tourists alike with its

large ballroom overlooking Grandfather Mountain, delectable meals, and a dining room that could host up to 200 people. (Above image: Mayview Manor circa 1980s).

Walter Alexander wasn't just happy with cottages - his vision for what Mayview could be was much more grand. In 1921 he began construction on the Mayview Manor Hotel and aimed to make Blowing Rock "America's Switzerland." Mayview Manor was built with local materials such as chestnut bark shingles for its exterior, chestnut hardwood, red oak, and maple for its interior, and its 16 chimneys were constructed using local stones. The manor had as many as 138 full-service rooms. Rita White of the Blowing Rock Historical Society remarked that the manor was "...the place to be. It was a true destination." In 1923 Alexander went on to found the Mayview Gun and Rod Club. The club consisted of 100 charter members and were given access to ten miles of lake and stream fishing as well as 460 acres of hunting grounds on Johns River Valley. Infamous sharpshooter Annie Oakley once managed the gun club during the summer of 1924. Mayview Manor was also known to host shooting exhibitions with Annie



Oakley. (Above right images: Annie Oakley demonstrating her skills at the Mayview Gun and Rod Club).



Known to locals as the “Queen of Blowing Rock Hotels” , Mayview Manor attracted big names such as Eleanor Roosevelt, Richard Nix, and Woodrow Wilson. Its uniquely beautiful setting upon its ridge gave guests sweeping views of Johns River Gorge and Alexander’s opulent standards for the manor made it something truly wondrous to behold. Unfortunately, Walter L. Alexander was not able to enjoy Mayview Manor’s

success for long after his untimely and abrupt passing in 1925. Alexander’s future development plans for Mayview Park and Mayview Manor were placed in the hands of others. Mayview Manor was subsequently purchased by Thomas Broyhill and C.E. Hayworth and then leased to hotelier Milton Chapman (known for his luxury hotels in Florida). (Above image: A brochure for Mayview Manor circa 1960s. Right image: Mayview Manor aerial photo circa 1960s).



Mayview was open seasonally from May to September from 1921 until 1966. The hotel changed owners several times throughout its multi-decade life ultimately leading to its fall into a state of disrepair. The hotel was demolished in 1978 to make way for a new series of condominiums. While the demolition was a significant loss

for the physical preservation of a major piece of Blowing Rock’s history, the spirit and memory of Mayview Manor lives on in the Mayview Park neighborhood and



the luxurious precedent set by the manor is obvious when observing other modern resorts in Blowing Rock. Speaking on the importance of Mayview Park and Mayview Manor, Blowing Rock resident Dorothy Henkel Summerville noted, "Not only was it lovely looking, but they had continental food and service...People came from everywhere and their Saturday night dance became "the thing." At Horse Show time you



stood in line to be served the most elaborate buffet you can imagine. All sorts of things carved out of ice, fancy molds of every description and every delicacy you can think of. They built a swimming pool on the view side of the hotel, a nine hole golf course where the horse show grounds are now, and houses began to spring up throughout Mayview." (Above image: Construction of the condominiums that replaced Mayview Manor. Photo circa 1980s. Left image: Broyhill Park, formerly, Mayview Park).

Mayview Manor may no longer be with us but Mayview Park certainly remains. The community is one of the oldest residential neighborhoods in the High Country and has 100 or so plots of land including Edgewood Path, Wonderland Trail, and Laurel Lane to name a few. Take a walk around Mayview Lake at Broyhill Park, Annie Cannon Gardens, or trek along the Glen Burney Trail to experience some of the beauty that Mayview still has to offer. Broyhill Park, as it is now known, was once "Mayview Park" until a generous renovation and refurbishment by the Broyhill Family Foundation. This tranquil slice of Mayview is a must-see for anyone who has yet to happen upon it.



"Cloudland" as it was once called is still a bustling community and remains an important part of Blowing Rock today. (Above image: A beautiful view off the Glen Burney Trail. Photo via WNCMagazine.com).